UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/476
5 October 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 62 (b)

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Relationship between disarmament and development

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations' commitment to promoting disarmament and development predates the onset of the cold war and has outlived it. A specific mandate on the relationship between disarmament and development was entrusted to the United Nations by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, held in 1987. The 150 States participating in the Conference adopted, by consensus, an action programme aimed at fostering an interrelated perspective on disarmament, development and security. 1/

2. The action programme arrived at two sets of conclusions: those addressed to the participating States themselves and those requesting follow-up action by the Secretary-General. In pursuance of paragraph 35 (ix) of the action programme, and subsequent resolutions (resolutions 42/45, 43/75 B, 44/116 L, 45/58 A and 46/36 C), the Secretary-General has submitted five successive reports to the General Assembly beginning in 1989. The first three of these reports (A/44/449, A/45/592 and A/46/527) described the activities undertaken by the Secretariat. The last two reports (A/47/452 and A/48/400) pointed to the changing international context in which the action programme would have to be carried out. The present sixth report, submitted in response to resolution 48/75 A of 16 December 1993, provides an overview of the implementation of the mandate given to the Secretary-General and, after drawing attention to the most current issues, requests review for further guidance.

II. OVERVIEW

3. Since the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, held in 1987, the Secretary-General has carried out his responsibilities in two phases.

4. During the period 1987-1990, the emphasis was on activities by the Secretariat in two broad areas: monitoring trends in military spending and promoting collective knowledge of non-military threats to international peace and security. During the period 1991-1993, greater attention was devoted to facilitating an exchange of national experience in conversion from military to civilian fields. This was also a period of expanding contacts with national and international bodies so that the United Nations could act as a catalyst by providing information, guidance and expertise.

5. During the first phase, which coincided with the ending of the cold war, the possibility of a "peace dividend" in the event of substantive progress in the field of disarmament provided a strong political incentive for a conceptual linkage between disarmament and development. Promotion of international security at lower levels of military spending became a major theme in the publications, media events and training programmes organized by the Department of Disarmament Affairs. Through intra-Secretariat and inter-agency cooperation, the Secretariat closely followed trends in global military spending. Data and statistics were compiled and analysed for use in statements by the Secretary-General and other senior officials, which contrasted the high levels of arms spending with the relatively modest resources required to meet global

needs like health, education and ecological security. A thematic political message emphasized an underlying linkage between disarmament and development, namely, that the world was over-armed and underdeveloped. Both over-armament and underdevelopment were presented as constituting threats to international peace and security.

6. During the second phase, after the end of the cold war, downward trends in global military spending were accompanied by a process of economic adjustment. A slowing down of the arms race had the effect of releasing technical skills, personnel, research and development capacities, plants and factories previously devoted to the military sector rather than making available immediately disposable financial resources. In some instances, agreements on banning specific categories of weapons led to urgent problems of finding ecologically safe and often costly methods of weapons disposal. In other instances, the technological gap between the civilian and military sectors made it difficult to find alternative employment for skilled personnel who had been serving in the military sector. Through a series of high-level international conferences, the Secretariat devoted much attention to promoting an exchange of national experience in economic adjustments during that phase.

7. The world is likely to see a continuing trend towards the redundancy of resources hitherto devoted to military ends. Deep cuts in the military spending of major military Powers have already occurred. Entire categories of weapons have been eliminated in the strategic category. Other weapons of mass destruction have been banned through negotiated agreements such as the chemical weapons convention. The very rationale for further arms accumulation is being called into question. Already there is mounting evidence that in resolving present day intra-State or inter-State conflicts, military strength is becoming less relevant.

8. However, the redeployment, redirection or conversion of resources into non-military uses has proved more difficult than was previously thought. National experiences have varied notably because of differences in the relative technological sophistication of their civilian and military sectors, pent-up demand for civilian goods and their general economic health. It is, none the less, broadly recognized that the transition necessitated by the end of the cold war will be easier if the global economy is in robust health. This process can be assisted directly through facilitating economic adjustments within States and indirectly through stimulating faster progress on global developmental issues such as commodity prices, trade, aid and debt relief.

9. As two vital areas of United Nations concern, disarmament and development are both entering a new period. Disarmament is being interpreted in terms broader than those related to agreements for arms reduction among the major military Powers. There is now a growing emphasis on restraint in military production and the discouragement of the use of military force world wide. Collective efforts are afoot for the greater employment of science and technology in peace-building.

10. Development, too, is increasingly understood as requiring more than demands by the South on the North. Already a political consensus is emerging that a global partnership for development rests essentially upon an expansion of economic opportunities, greater participation, enlarged choices and fuller utilization of people's potential everywhere. Concessional terms for the most seriously affected States no more detract politically from a global view of development than do affirmative action and social security from national well-being.

III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

11. Since the adoption of the action programme in 1987, a great deal has been done both by Member States and by the United Nations Secretariat towards the implementation of the programme. For its part, the Secretariat has carried out its mandate as comprehensively as possible despite the increasingly limited resources available to it. Nevertheless, much remains to be done in that area. In the light of the changed international situation and the lessons learned through national attempts at dealing with military and economic adjustments in the post-cold-war era, a critical review of the whole issue is needed before further action in the field can be promoted. Such a review would provide new directives and guidelines for further activities on the part of the Secretariat in this important area, which would reflect the new realities in international relations. The World Summit for Social Development in 1995 could provide an opportunity for such a review. Member States might also decide on other procedures for carrying it out. Submission of further reports on the subject by the Secretary-General will, therefore, depend on a relevant evaluation of the programme by Member States and the conclusions they reach in that respect, including any specific requests they may wish to address to the Secretary-General.

Notes

1/ See Final Document of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, New York, 24 August-11 September 1987 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.87.IX.8).